



# Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome



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CDC's website is being modified to comply with President Trump's Executive Orders.

## Symptoms of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

### KEY POINTS

- Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome symptoms are common in many other illnesses.
- There is no test to confirm ME/CFS. This makes it hard to diagnose.
- Symptoms are unpredictable and may change or come and go over time.
- However, a combination of core symptoms are used to diagnose ME/CFS.



### Primary symptoms

ME/CFS has five core symptoms. You must have three main ME/CFS symptoms and at least one of the other two symptoms to be diagnosed with ME/CFS.

#### Less ability to do activities and fatigue (required)

People with ME/CFS have a much lower ability to do activities they could do before they got sick. This limitation comes with fatigue and lasts six months or longer.

The fatigue:

- Can be severe
- Isn't caused by an unusually difficult activity
- Isn't relieved by sleep or rest

#### Worse symptoms after activity (required)

People with ME/CFS experience a worsening of their symptoms after any type of activity - physical or mental. These activities wouldn't have been a problem before they became ill. This is called Post-Exertional Malaise (PEM).

PEM can lead to a cycle of "pushing" to do more, followed by "crashing." During a crash, people with ME/CFS may have a variety of symptoms. These can include difficulty thinking, problems sleeping, sore throat, headaches, feeling dizzy, or severe tiredness.

It may take days, weeks, or longer to recover from a crash. Some people may be confined to bed or the house. As examples:

- Attending a school event may leave someone house-bound for days.
- Grocery shopping may require a nap in the car before driving home.
- Doing errands may require getting a ride home.
- Showering may leave someone bed-bound for days.
- Working may mean spending nights and weekends recovering.

#### Sleep Problems (Required)

People with ME/CFS may not feel better or less tired, even after a full night's sleep. Some may have problems falling asleep or staying asleep.

## Additional symptoms (At least 1 required)

In addition to the three required symptoms above, one of the following two symptoms is needed to be diagnosed with ME/CFS.

### Memory and thinking problems

Most people with ME/CFS have trouble thinking quickly, remembering things, and paying attention to details. People with ME/CFS often say they have “brain fog” to describe this problem. This is because they feel “stuck in a fog” and not able to think clearly.

### Problems being upright

People with ME/CFS often report their symptoms get worse when they are standing or sitting upright. This is called orthostatic intolerance.

People with ME/CFS may be lightheaded, dizzy, weak, or faint while standing or sitting up. They may have vision changes like blurring or seeing spots.

## Other common symptoms

Many but not all people with ME/CFS have other symptoms.

**Pain** is very common in people with ME/CFS. The type of pain, where it occurs, and how bad it is varies a lot. The pain people with ME/CFS feel is not caused by an injury. The most common types of pain in ME/CFS are:

- Muscle pain and aches
- Joint pain without swelling or redness
- Headaches, either new or worsening

Some people with ME/CFS may also have:

- Tender lymph nodes in the neck or armpits
- Frequent sore throat
- Digestive issues, like irritable bowel syndrome
- Chills and night sweats
- Allergies or sensitivities to foods, odors, chemicals, light and noise
- Muscle weakness
- Shortness of breath
- Irregular heartbeat

#### SOURCES

**CONTENT SOURCE:**  
[National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases \(NCEZID\)](#)

#### SOURCES

- Disclaimer: This website is for informational purposes only. The information provided on this website is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.